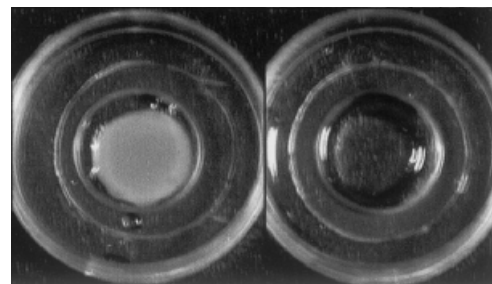


Clinical Snippets

Lowell A. Goldsmith

LITTLE MOLECULE WITH A DEEP PUNCH

Glycerol (Glycerin) is a component of many topical medications and innumerable cosmetics. Glycerol is usually thought to work by hydration of the epidermis through the molecule's high water-retaining abilities. Yeh and coworkers demonstrate how glycerol can disassemble collagen fibers, optically clearing the dermis before some dermal laser treatments. Altering the dermis may also be important for improving wound healing or might even decrease keloids. A practical application in the clinic may be the pretreatment of sclerotic areas of keloids before steroid injections. *J Invest Dermatol* 121:1332–1335, 2003



KELOIDAL EPIDERMIS

Dermal and epidermal interactions are well known during skin development. Funayama and coworkers posit a role for the epidermis in the proliferation and decreased apoptosis of fibroblasts derived from keloids. If the epidermis is the essential trigger for fibroblast proliferation in healing keloids, this leads to practical ways to modify these interactions to prevent recurrences after keloid removal. *J Invest Dermatol* 121:1326–1331, 2003

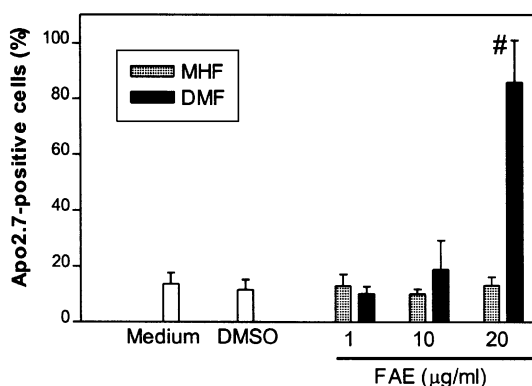


THE ITCH MACHINE

While itch is the most common noxious symptom from skin disease, the clinician has few techniques for quantifying the sensation. Reliable and valid quantification could lead to a more rational use of symptomatic therapies. Stener-Victorin and coworkers produced itch in humans with the iontophoresis of histamine. Subjects were then asked to match their perceived itch sensation with the intensity of a pain sensation, using an available device, "Pain Matcher." Pain Matcher proved a reliable methodology for measuring itch intensity. *J Invest Dermatol* 121:1301–1305, 2003

A HAIR IN THE HEAD IS WORTH TWO IN THE BRUSH (OLIVER HERFORD)

The precise molecular basis of male pattern baldness is unknown, and even the heredity of the disease is unclear. Progress is presented in the article from the antipodes by Nyholt, in which 884 pairs of monozygous and dizygous male twins between the ages of 25 and 56 evaluated themselves for male pattern baldness using a standard pictorial template. Heritability was high (0.81; 95% confidence interval: 0.77–0.85). This is consistent with other data that polymorphisms in the androgen receptor or in linkage disequilibrium with the androgen receptor are associated with baldness. Environmental factors such as diet, vitamins, alcohol, smoking, and tight hats were not found to be major causes of baldness. *J Invest Dermatol* 121:1561–1564, 2003



DIMETHYLFUMARATE FOR PSORIASIS

Fumaric acid esters have been approved for psoriasis treatment in Germany since the 1960s. These interesting molecules inhibit NF-κB and induce apoptosis in dendritic cells. In a study reported by Treumer and coworkers, stimulated human T cells were susceptible to DMF-induced apoptosis; this may be mechanistically related to the efficiency of this drug for psoriasis. *J Invest Dermatol* 121:1383–1388, 2003